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Environment and sustainable development: promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005

Implementation of agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Letter dated 16 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you, on behalf of the European Union, the joint declaration entitled "The way forward on renewable energy" (see annex). The declaration, launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development by the European Union and like-minded countries, known as the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition (see the information sheet on their activities in annex), has received increased attention and support.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 94 (a) and 95.

(*Signed*) Marcello **Spatafora**
Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 16 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

THE EUROPEAN UNION, BULGARIA, CYPRUS, CZECH REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, HUNGARY, ICELAND, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, MALTA, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, POLAND, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES, SWITZERLAND and TURKEY

"THE WAY FORWARD ON RENEWABLE ENERGY"

1. We express our strong commitment to the promotion of renewable energy and to the increase of the share of renewable energy sources in the global total primary energy supply. We fully endorse the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, considering it a good basis for further international co-operation, and intend to go beyond the agreement reached in the area of renewable energy.

2. Increasing the use of renewable energy is an essential element to achieve sustainable development at national and global level. Renewable energy can provide important new ways to reduce pollution, diversify and secure energy supply and help provide access to energy in support of poverty eradication. Furthermore, the burning of fossil fuels is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions and these emissions need to be reduced to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change in order to achieve the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to prevent dangerous climate change.

3. We commit ourselves to co-operate in the further development and promotion of renewable energy technologies. Recognising the sense of urgency as expressed in paragraph 19(e) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, we will work together to substantially increase the global share of renewable energy sources, with regular review of progress, on the basis of clear and ambitious time bound targets set at the national, regional and hopefully at the global level.

4. We have adopted, or will adopt, such targets for the increase of renewable energy and we encourage others to do likewise. We are convinced that this will help to implement the necessary policies to deliver a substantial increase in the global share of renewable energy sources. Such targets are important tools to guide investment and develop the market for renewable energy technologies.

5. We commit ourselves to working with others to achieve this goal, especially through the partnership initiatives being taken which could contribute to expanding the use of renewable energy, as well as forthcoming international conferences on renewable energy.

Information sheet

1. Introduction

Paragraph 19 (e) of the WSSD Plan of Implementation states that there is a need to "... with a sense of urgency, substantially increase the global share of renewable energy sources with the objective of increasing its contribution to total energy supply". Whilst "recognizing the role of national and voluntary regional targets as well as initiatives, where they exist" these conclusions (adopted on September 4, 2002) stopped short of setting targets and timetables for renewable energy.

Therefore, the European Community and its member states -- being strong advocates of renewable energies and having experienced significant benefits from the setting of targets and timetables, launched the "coalition of the like-minded countries on the way forward on Renewable Energies".

2. Members

As of June 4, 2003, 82 countries have confirmed membership of the Coalition and more are expected to do so in the near future.

There were 66 founding members (see header in annex for full list). In addition to the EU15, the initiative was co-sponsored by 51 countries including all EU Candidate Countries[1], Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand, and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)[2]. Four countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uganda) supported the initiative from the floor at the WSSD and have later confirmed their position, bringing the total of "founding" members to 70. Since the launch in September 2002, nine more countries confirmed their participation, i.e. Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Serbia and Montenegro, Israel, the Philippines, and Singapore[1]. Four new countries joined during the 1st International Conference (Brussels, June 4th, 2003); i.e. Botswana Colombia, South-Africa, and The Gambia.

3. Objectives

The Members are committed to implementing and even going beyond the commitments stated in paragraph 19 of the WSSD plan of implementation, by closely co-operating on the basis of ambitious and time-bound targets.

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[1] Malta, Cyprus and Singapore as well as subscribing individually to the Joint Declaration are also members of AOSIS and this is taken into account in calculating the number of countries.

[2] AOSIS includes 36 countries in

- the Pacific Ocean [12]: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Western Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu;
- in the Caribbean [14]: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago;
- in the Atlantic Ocean [3]: Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Sao Tome and Principe;
- in the Indian Ocean [4]: Comoros, Maldives, Mauritius, and the Seychelles;
- in the Mediterranean [2]: Cyprus, and Malta; and
- in the South China Sea [1]: Singapore.

AOSIS observers include American Samoa, Guam, the Netherlands Antilles, Niue, and the U.S. Virgin Islands [5].
Together they represent one fifth of the total membership of the United Nations.

Targets and timetables can help countries to implement policies to guide investments and develop markets for renewable energy technologies and services with the aim of substantially increasing the global share of renewable energy sources[3].

The EU supports the adoption of targets and time-bound tables based on a bottom-up approach and is developing its proposals for an international strategy and action plan on this basis.

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[3] The Coalition initiative is additional to the EU Energy Initiative and other EU sponsored type II energy initiatives such as REEP and MEDREP.